

CLAIMS.

We claim:

1. A method of issuing a negotiable instrument to an individual comprising:  
detecting a direct deposit of funds into a first account associated with the individual and  
maintained by a first entity;

in response to the direct deposit of funds into the first account, transferring the total  
amount of the funds into a second account associated with the individual and maintained by a  
second entity, the total amount of the funds being added to a balance of the second account;

detecting a request by the individual for the issuance of a requested negotiable instrument  
having a value;

in response to the request, determining that the value of the requested negotiable  
instrument is not in excess of the balance of the second account;

authorizing the issuance of the requested negotiable instrument to the individual; and

in response to the issuance of the requested negotiable instrument, debiting the balance of  
the second account by the value of the requested negotiable instrument.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein detecting the direct deposit of funds into the first  
account comprises detecting a credit in the total amount of the funds posted in the first account;  
and

wherein automatically transferring the total amount of the funds into the second account  
comprises posting a debit in the total amount of the funds in the first account and posting a credit  
in the total amount of the funds in the second account.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the first entity is subject to federal banking  
regulations and wherein the second entity is not subject to federal banking regulations.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the first entity is a bank and wherein the second  
entity is a licensed money transmitter.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein determining that the value of the requested  
negotiable instrument is not in excess of the balance of the second account comprises  
determining that the value of the requested negotiable instrument plus any fees charged to the  
individual is not in excess of the balance of the second account.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the individual requests the issuance of multiple negotiable instruments;

wherein determining that the value of the requested negotiable instrument is not in excess of the balance of the second account comprises determining that the aggregate value of the requested multiple negotiable instruments is not in excess of the balance of the second account;

wherein authorizing the issuance of the requested negotiable instrument to the individual comprises authorizing the issuance of the requested multiple negotiable instruments to the individual; and

wherein debiting the balance of the second account by the value of the requested negotiable instrument comprises debiting the balance of the second account by the aggregate value of the requested multiple negotiable instruments.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein determining that the aggregate value of the requested multiple negotiable instruments is not in excess of the balance of the second account comprises determining that the aggregate value of the requested multiple negotiable instruments plus any fees charged to the individual is not in excess of the balance of the second account.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

detecting a balance increase request by the individual, the balance increase request indicating that the balance of the second account is to be increased by a requested amount and that the individual has tendered a payment in the requested amount;

in response to the balance increase request, crediting the requested amount to the second account.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein determining that the value of the requested negotiable instrument is not in excess of the balance of the second account comprises:

receiving a PIN and an account number,

determining that the account number identifies the second account;

determining that the PIN identifies the individual as being authorized to access the second account; and

comparing the value of the requested negotiable instrument to the balance of the second account.

10. A method for issuing a prepaid negotiable instrument to an individual, prepayment of the prepaid negotiable instrument occurring when a direct deposit of funds into a first account maintained by a first entity is swept into a second account maintained by a second entity, the method comprising:

5 receiving from the individual a card bearing an account number;

receiving from the individual a PIN;

based on the account number and the PIN, requesting authorization for the issuance of a negotiable instrument to the individual in a requested amount;

10 receiving an authorization to issue the negotiable instrument, the authorization indicating that the requested amount plus any fees charged to the individual is not in excess of a balance of the second account;

in response to the authorization, issuing the negotiable instrument to the individual; and

15 in response to issuing the negotiable instrument, issuing a notification that the negotiable instrument has been issued and that the second account is to be debited in the requested amount.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising cashing the issued negotiable instrument and providing the individual with cash.

12. The method of claim 10, further comprising:

20 receiving a request from the individual to increase the balance of the second account in a requested amount;

determining that the individual is authorized to increase the balance of the second account;

receiving from the individual a payment in the requested amount;

25 generating a balance increase request requesting that the second account be credited in the requested amount.

13. A negotiable instrument payment system comprising:

a first account maintained by a first entity and hosted by a first entity computer system, the first account capable of receiving a direct deposit of funds;

a second account maintained by a second entity and hosted by a second entity computer system;

an account sweep control module in communication with the first entity computer system and the second entity computer system and configured for detecting the direct deposit of the funds into the first account and for transferring the total amount of the funds into the second account, the total amount of the funds being added to a balance of the second account;

a transaction control module in communication with the second entity computer system and a POS terminal, the POS terminal comprising a negotiable instrument printer for issuing negotiable instruments;

wherein the transaction control module detects a request from the POS terminal for the issuance of a requested negotiable instrument having a value;

wherein the transaction control module communicates with the second entity computer system to determine that the value of the requested negotiable instrument plus any fees charged to the individual is not in excess of the balance of the second account;

wherein the transaction control module authorizes the POS terminal to issue the requested negotiable instrument to the individual;

wherein the POS terminal issues the negotiable instrument; and

wherein the transaction control module communicates with the second entity computer system to debit the balance of the second account by the value of the requested negotiable instrument.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein detecting the direct deposit of funds into the first account comprises detecting a credit in the total amount of the funds posted in the first account; and

wherein transferring the total amount of the funds into the second account comprises posting a debit in the total amount of the funds in the first account and posting a credit in the total amount of the funds in the second account.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein the first entity is subject to federal banking regulations and wherein the second entity is not subject to federal banking regulations.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein the first entity is a bank and wherein the second entity is a licensed money transmitter.

17. The system of claim 13, wherein the transaction control module is further operable for:

detecting a balance increase request from the POS terminal, the balance increase request indicating that the balance of the second account is to be increased by a requested amount and that the individual has tendered a payment in the requested amount; and

in response to the balance increase request, communicating with the second entity computer system to credit the requested amount to the balance of the second account.

18. The system of claim 13, wherein determining that the value of the requested negotiable instrument plus any fees charged to the individual is not in excess of the balance of the second account comprises:

receiving a PIN and an account number from the POS terminal;

communicating with the second entity computer system to determine that the account number identifies the second account;

communicating with the second entity computer system to determine that the PIN identifies the individual as being authorized to access the second account; and

communicating with the second entity computer system to compare the value of the requested negotiable instrument plus any fees to the balance of the second account.

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19. A method for conducting anonymous transactions with an individual comprising:

providing an anonymous account identified by an account number;

providing the individual with the account number and a PIN;

upon verification of the PIN and the account number, authorizing the individual to make an initial deposit of funds into the anonymous account;

upon verification of the PIN and the account number, authorizing the issuance of negotiable instruments to the individual in an amount not exceeding the initial deposit of funds; and

when the issuance of negotiable instruments has depleted the initial deposit of funds, closing the anonymous account.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

determining that the individual has provided personal identifying information and a request to establish a non-anonymous account;

providing a non-anonymous account associated with the individual and having a second account number and a second PIN; and

upon verification of the second account number and the second PIN, authorizing the individual to make subsequent deposits of funds into the non-anonymous account.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the non-anonymous account is maintained by a non-bank entity and is not authorized to accept direct deposits of funds; and

wherein the method further comprises providing a communications link between the non-anonymous account and a bank account authorized to accept direct deposits of funds, whereby the communications link allows direct deposits of funds into the bank account to be swept into the non-anonymous account.

